

ART. V.—THE MISSION OF MOSES.

(From the German of Schiller.)

THE founding of the Jewish Polity by Moses is one of the most remarkable events that history has preserved. It is important because of the force of intellect whereby it was achieved; more important still, because of its results to the world,—results which continue even to our own day. Two religions, which rule the greater part of the world—Christianity and Mohammedism—rest upon the religion of the Hebrews; and, without this, there never would have been a Christianity or a Koran.

In a certain sense, indeed, it is undeniable that we owe to the Mosaic religion a great part of the enlightenment which we enjoy in the present day: for, by means of this religion, a precious truth, which unaided reason would have discovered only after a long series of efforts—the doctrine of the One God—was diffused among the multitude at a very early period, and held by them as an object of blind faith, until at last, in superior minds, it ripened into an idea of reason. A great part of the human race were thereby spared the mournful errors consequent upon Polytheism; and the Hebrew constitution possessed this peculiar advantage, that the religion of the wise did not stand in that direct contradiction to the religion of the people, which exhibited itself in the case of the enlightened heathen. Considered from this point of view, the Hebrew nation must appear to us to occupy an important position in universal history; and all the accusations commonly brought against this people, all the efforts of ingenious men to depreciate them, will not prevent us from doing them justice. The unworthiness of the nation cannot destroy the exalted merit of their Lawgiver: as little can it annihilate the vast influence which they rightfully assert in world-history. We must regard them as we would a common and unclean vessel, wherein something very precious has been treasured up; we must honour them as the channel which, impure though it was, Providence selected for conveying to us that noblest of blessings—Truth; but which, the same Providence destroyed as soon as it had done its appointed work. Thus we shall be equally far, on the one hand, from ascribing to the Hebrew people an honour which never belonged to them; and, on the other, from withholding our tribute to merits which cannot be fairly disputed.

The Hebrews came into Egypt, it is well known, a single nomad family, numbering but seventy souls, and there became

a people. During a period of about four hundred years, which they spent in this country, they increased to nearly two millions, among whom they numbered, at the time of their departure from the kingdom, six hundred thousand fighting men. During their long sojourn there they lived apart from the Egyptians, separated from them both by the peculiar locality that they occupied, and by their nomad condition, which rendered them odious to the natives of the country, and excluded them from all the rights of Egyptian citizenship. They maintained among themselves the pastoral mode of government,—the *pater-familias* ruling the family, the tribe-prince the tribe—and thus formed an *imperium in imperio*, which, in process of time, by its amazing extension, awakened the jealousy of the kings.

Such a multitude, living thus apart in the heart of the kingdom, in the indolence and leisure of the shepherd-life—compactly united among themselves, but having no interest in common with the state—might, in case of a hostile invasion, become dangerous, and be tempted to turn to their own account that political weakness of which they were unoccupied spectators. State-policy recommended, therefore, that they should be closely watched; that they should be employed; and that measures should be taken for the lessening of their numbers. They were, consequently, burdened with laborious work; and, when the discovery had been once made, that they might be rendered useful to the state, selfishness co-operated with public policy in urging the increase of their burdens.

They were ruthlessly forced to state task-work, and special overseers were appointed to drive and maltreat them. This barbarous usage did not, however, check their growth. Sound policy would, then, have naturally dictated their being distributed among the population of the country, and admitted to an equality of rights; but this was disallowed by the universal antipathy that the Egyptians entertained towards them. This antipathy was heightened by the effects which itself necessarily produced. When the Egyptian king gave the province of Goshen, on the eastern bank of the lower Nile, as a dwelling-place to the family of Jacob, he had scarcely calculated upon its being tenanted by a posterity of two millions. In all probability the province was not remarkably extensive; and the grant would have been abundantly liberal, though provision had been made for but the hundredth part of this posterity. Now, since this dwelling-place of the Hebrews did not enlarge its frontiers relatively to their increased population, they would have to live closer and closer together in each successive generation, until at last they were crowded within the narrowest possible compass,

in a manner highly prejudicial to health. What more natural, than that all the consequences should now arise, which are inevitable in such a case,—extreme filth, and infectious disorders? Here, then, the foundation was laid for that distemper, which has continued down to the present day, distinctive of this nation. It must have raged, at that time, to a fearful extent. The most formidable scourge of that climate—Leprosy—crept in among them, and became hereditary through many generations. By it the fountains of life were gradually poisoned, and an hereditary tendency of the national constitution arose, in the end, out of a casual distemper. The universality of this calamity is sufficiently evidenced by the multiplied precautions which the legislator has taken against it; and the unanimous testimony of profane writers, of Manetho, the Egyptian, of Diodorus Siculus, of Tacitus, Lysimachus, Strabo, and of many others, who knew little or nothing of the Jews except this their national disease,—proves how wide and deep the impression of it must have been in the Egyptian mind.

This Leprosy, then,—a natural consequence of their confined abode, of their bad and penurious diet, and of the ill-usage to which they were subjected,—became, in process of time, a new cause of such ill-usage. Despised from the first, as shepherds, and avoided as strangers—now they were shunned and abhorred as pest-stricken. The fear and aversion which the Egyptians had always cherished towards them, were reinforced by disgust and contemptuous loathing. Against men marked out, as it were, thus fearfully, by the wrath of the gods, every thing was held permissible; and the holiest human rights were denied them without a scruple.

It is not wonderful that the barbarous treatment to which they were subjected became increasingly severe in proportion as its effects made themselves conspicuous; and that their oppressors punished them with renewed rigour for the very miseries which they had themselves inflicted upon them.

The false policy of the Egyptians knew no other mode of correcting the error which it had committed, than by a new and yet more outrageous error. Since, with all their tyranny, they did not succeed in stopping up the sources of population, they resorted to a new expedient, as atrocious as it was ineffective—the slaughter, namely, of all male infants immediately after birth. But, thanks to the better nature of man! despots are not always obeyed when they command atrocities. The midwives of Egypt contemned the unnatural mandate; and the government could not effectuate its violent ends, but by violent means. Hired assassins roamed, by royal command, through the He-

brews' territory, and slaughtered every male infant in the cradle. In this way the Egyptian monarch would, no doubt, have accomplished his purpose at last; and, in a few generations, have exterminated the Jewish race, had not a deliverer interposed.

But whence could this deliverer come? Hardly from among the Egyptians; for how could it be expected that one of these should interest himself for a nation which was strange to him, whose very language he did not understand, and would not take the trouble to learn, and which necessarily seemed to him both incapable and unworthy of a better fate? Still less from among themselves; for what had the Hebrew people finally become, under a tyranny of some centuries' standing? They had become the rudest, the most depraved, the most reprobate people of the earth; barbarized by four hundred years of neglect and ill-usage; rendered both timid and irritable by long-continued slavery; debased, even in their own eyes, by an hereditary infamy; unnerved, incapacitated for heroic daring,—in fine, well-nigh degraded to the level of brute-stupidity. How could a free man, an enlightened man, a hero or a statesman, come forth from a race thus neglected and despised? Where was a man likely to be found among them qualified to give weight and importance to a condemned slave-rabble; self-respect to a long-oppressed people; victory, over civilized oppressors, to a rude mob of ignorant herdsmen? As little from among the then Hebrews, as from the basest caste of Hindoo Pariahs, could a bold and heroic spirit come forth.

Here must we admire the hand of Providence, which solves the hardest problems by the simplest means; not of that Providence which interferes with the economy of nature, violently and by way of miracle, but of that providence which has so pre-ordained Nature's economy as to accomplish extraordinary ends in a gentle and gradual manner. A native Egyptian would be destitute of the requisite motive,—national interest and feeling,—to induce him to set himself up for a deliverer of the Hebrews. A mere Hebrew would be destitute of the intellectual power requisite for the undertaking. What expedient, then, did destiny adopt? It took a Hebrew, but separated him, at an early age, from his rude countrymen, and gave him access to the stores of Egyptian wisdom; and thus *a Hebrew, educated as an Egyptian*, became the instrument of his nation's deliverance from bondage.

A Hebrew mother, of the tribe of Levi, had, during three months, concealed her new-born son from the assassins before alluded to; but at last she relinquished all hope of keeping him longer under her care. Necessity dictated a stratagem, whereby

she hoped to save him. She laid her infant in a little chest of papyrus, secured with pitch against the entrance of water, and awaited the hour at which Pharaoh's daughter usually bathed. As this hour approached, the child's sister was directed to deposit the chest among the reeds near which the king's daughter had to pass, and where she could not help seeing it. The mother, however, remained at a little distance, in order to watch the child's fate. The princess soon perceived the boy; and, being pleased with his appearance, determined to save him. At this juncture, the sister ventured to approach, and offered to bring a Hebrew nurse, to which the princess consented. Thus the mother regained her child; and now she might rear him openly and without risk. In this manner he was enabled to learn the language of his countrymen, and to become acquainted with their customs; whilst his mother would not forget to impress upon his tender mind a lively image of the national misery. When he had reached an age at which maternal care was no longer necessary, and it became requisite to sever him from all share in his nation's fortunes, his mother redelivered him to the king's daughter, and placed his future destinies in her hand. The princess adopted him, and named him Moses, in memory of his rescue from the water. Thus, from a slave-child, and a doomed victim, he became the son of a king's daughter; and, as such, shared in all the privileges of the royal children. The priests, to whose order he belonged, in virtue of his adoption into the royal family, now took charge of his education, and instructed him in all the wisdom of Egypt, which was the *peculium* of their caste. It is probable, indeed, that they admitted him, without reserve, into all their secrets; since a passage of the Egyptian historian, Manetho, in which he represents Moses as an apostate from the religion of Egypt, and a fugitive priest of Heliopolis, justifies the supposition that he was destined for the priestly office.

Now, in order to ascertain what Moses might have acquired in this school, and what influence the education there received by him may have had upon his subsequent legislation, we must examine the Egyptian institute somewhat in detail, and listen to the testimony of ancient historians respecting it. The martyr, Stephen, represents him, we must bear in mind, as having been brought up in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. The historian, Philo, says that Moses was initiated, by the Egyptian priests, into the philosophy of symbols and hieroglyphs, and also into the mysteries of the sacred animals. This testimony is confirmed by others; and, if we take a view of the system which went by the name of the Egyptian mysteries, we shall

find a remarkable similarity between these mysteries and the subsequent proceedings and institutions of Moses.

The worship of the elder nations soon degenerated, it is well known, into polytheism and superstition; and even among those tribes designated, in Scripture, as worshippers of the true God, the prevalent ideas of the Supreme Being were neither pure nor elevated, and were very far from being founded upon a clear, intelligent insight. But, when the improved condition of society, and the establishment of regular government, permitted the existence of separate classes, and religion became the peculiar province of one of such classes; when the human mind, exempted from the distracting cares of life, gained leisure for the undisturbed contemplation of itself and of nature; when, in fine, clearer conceptions were obtained of the economy of material nature,—it could not but follow that reason would become victorious over those gross errors, and that mens' conceptions of the Supreme Being would be refined and elevated. The idea of a *universal connexion of things*, would naturally lead to the notion of one sole supreme Intelligence; and that idea,—where should it have sprung up, in the first instance, but in the mind of a priest? Since Egypt was the first civilized state known to history, and the most ancient of the mysteries are said to have originated there, it was in Egypt, most probably, that the idea of the unity of the Supreme Being was first conceived by a human mind. Now, the fortunate discoverer of this soul-elevating truth, would look among his friends for suitable persons to whom he might confide the sacred treasure; and thus it descended from one thinker to another, through we know not how many generations, until at last it became the property of a little community of minds qualified to apprehend it, and to give it a further development.

But, since a certain degree of knowledge and intellectual power is an indispensable pre-requisite to the right apprehension and application of the idea of the One God—since the faith of the Divine Unity involved, as a necessary consequence, contempt for the regnant polytheism, it was soon perceived that it would be imprudent and dangerous to proclaim these opinions publicly and freely. The new doctrine could not gain acceptance until the old national deities were overthrown and exposed to contempt. But it could not be expected that every individual who might be taught to despise the antique superstition, would be equally capable of raising his mind to a pure conception of the truth; besides, the whole social polity was built upon that very superstition—destroy this, and you destroyed at the same time all the supports on which the state fabric rested, and it was

by no means certain that the new religion which might be substituted for it, would be in the first instance, sufficiently stable to uphold that fabric.

If, on the other hand, the attempt to dethrone the ancient deities miscarried, the individual making the attempt would array against himself the blind forces of fanaticism, and become a victim of the popular rage. It seemed then, the better course to make the new and dangerous truth the exclusive property of a small and select society—to choose from among the multitude such as might evince capacity for its reception, and admit them into fellowship,—and to enwrap the sacred truth itself with a veil of mystery, which no one, unless specially qualified, should be able to draw aside.

For this purpose, Hieroglyphs were adopted—a speaking picture-writing, which concealed a general idea under a combination of sensible images, and whose interpretation depended upon a number of predetermined arbitrary rules. Since these sages were well aware from their observation of the nature and workings of the popular idolatry, with what power youthful hearts may be wrought upon through the medium of the imagination and the senses,—they scrupled not to employ this species of deception in the service of truth; they introduced, therefore, the new ideas into their disciples' minds, with a certain external pomp, and availing themselves of every imaginable expedient adapted to this end, they brought the novice's mind into such a state of passionate emotion as would render it readily receptive of the new truth. Of this description of expedients were the lustrations which the candidate for initiation was required to undergo; the washing and sprinkling, the linen vestments, the abstinence from all sensual pleasures, the excitation and elevation of the mind by song, a significant silence, a rapid alternation between darkness and light, and the like.

These ceremonies, together with the above-mentioned mysterious images and hieroglyphs, and the secret truths which lay enveloped in these hieroglyphs, and for the reception of which the forms just alluded to were intended to prepare the mind, were designated collectively by the name *Mysteries*. They had their seat in the temples of Isis and Serapis, and at a later period, furnished a model for the mysteries of Eleusis and Samothrace, and more recently still for those of freemasonry.

It appears to be established beyond a doubt, that the purport of the most ancient mysteries celebrated at Heliopolis and Memphis was, during the period of their pristine purity, the unity of God and the confutation of Paganism, and that the immortality of the soul was likewise inculcated in them. The

individuals admitted to participate in these momentous disclosures, were named *Seers* or *Epophtæ*, since the perception of a previously hidden truth may be compared with the passing from darkness to light; perhaps also on the ground that they actually and literally *saw* the newly-revealed truths in sensible exhibition.

They could not, however, reach this final stage of *insight* immediately and at once, since the mind needed to be purified of many errors, and to pass through several preparatory stages before it could bear the full light of truth; there were consequently, steps or gradations, and it was only in the inner sanctuary that the veil was entirely removed from before their eyes.

The *Epophtæ* acknowledged one sole supreme Cause of all things, a *primum mobile* of nature, the Being of Beings, which was identical with the Demiurgos of the Greek sages. Nothing is more sublime than the simple grandeur of their language respecting the Creator of the world. In order to distinguish him in a quite decisive manner, they gave him no name whatever. A name, they said, is needed only for the sake of distinction. He who exists alone needs not a name, for there is none with whom he can be confounded. Under an ancient statue of Isis, these words were inscribed, "I AM THAT WHICH IS;" and upon a pyramid at Sais was the primeval, note-worthy inscription, "I AM ALL THAT IS, THAT WAS, AND THAT WILL BE; NO MORTAL MAN HATH LIFTED MY VEIL." No one was allowed to enter the temple of Serapis, who did not bear upon his breast or brow the name JAO or J-HA-HO, a name nearly identical in sound with the Hebrew *Jehovah*, and probably of the same import; and no name was pronounced in Egypt with more reverence than this name *Jao*. In the hymn which the Hierophant, or president of the sanctuary sung to the candidate for initiation, this was the first disclosure respecting the nature of the Deity: "HE IS ONE, AND OF HIMSELF, AND TO THIS ONE ALL THINGS OWE THEIR BEING."

The rite of circumcision was an essential preliminary to initiation, to which even Pythagoras was obliged to submit before his admission into the Egyptian mysteries; this mark of distinction from others who were not circumcised, was intended to indicate a peculiar closeness of brotherhood and nearness of relation to the Deity, with which design Moses subsequently availed himself of it in legislating for the Hebrews.

In the interior of the temple, various sacred utensils expressive of a hidden meaning were exhibited to the candidate. Among these was a sacred chest, named the *coffin of Serapis*, and which might have been originally an emblem of secret doctrine, but at

a later period, when the institute had degenerated, served for the playing off of a number of priestly juggleries. To carry about this chest was the privilege of the priests, or of a special class of servants of the sanctuary, who were hence named *kistophori* (chest bearers). No one but the Hierophant was permitted to uncover this chest, or so much as to touch it; of one who had the temerity to open it, it is related that he suddenly became insane.

In the Egyptian mysteries, the candidate was afterwards introduced to certain hieroglyphic symbols of the divinity, which were compounded from the forms of various animals. Of this description was the well-known Sphinx:—it was intended by this symbol to indicate the attributes which are united in the Supreme Being, by bringing together into one body, all that is most powerful in living creatures. Something was taken from the strongest bird, the eagle—something from the strongest wild beast, the lion—something from the strongest tame beast, the ox—and something from man, the strongest of all animals. The form of the ox, in particular, or of Apis, was used as the emblem of strength, in order to typify the omnipotence of the Supreme Being:—now the ox, in the primitive language, was called *Cherub*.

These mystic shapes, to which none but the Epoptæ possessed the key, gave to the mysteries themselves a visibleness and tangibleness of exterior, which deceived the people, and had something in common even with the popular idolatry. Superstition, consequently, received, by means of the external clothing of the mysteries, perpetual support and nourishment, whilst she was ridiculed within the sanctuary.

It is easy to understand how this pure theism could live side by side with idolatry; for whilst in its essence it was subversive of idolatry, in form it upheld and promoted idolatry. This contradiction between the priests' and the people's religion was vindicated by necessity in the case of the founders of the mysteries; it appeared to be the less of two evils, since it seemed easier to check the evil consequences of the concealment of truth, than to arrest the mischievous results of a premature disclosure. But when, in the course of time, unworthy members intruded themselves within the circle of the initiated—when the institute degenerated from its pristine purity,—that, which in the first instance, had been a mere temporary expedient, (the secrecy,) became the main end of the institute; and, instead of gradually purifying the regnant superstition and preparing the people for the reception of truth, it was thought expedient to lead them further into error, and plunge them

deeper into superstition. Priests' juggleries now took the place of the pure and innocent purposes before described; and the very institute which had been designed to preserve, and cautiously to diffuse, the knowledge of the true and only God, began to work most powerfully in the opposite direction, and to degenerate into a school of idolatry. The Hierophants, with a view to maintain their lordship over the minds of the votaries, and to keep expectation perpetually on the stretch, thought it advisable to interpose new and ever-increasingly protracted delays, before making that last disclosure which would for ever dispel all false anticipations, and to render access to the sanctuary as difficult as possible by all sorts of theatrical tricks. At last the key to the hieroglyphs was entirely lost; and now these were themselves taken for the very truth, which, in the first instance, they were merely designed to veil over.

It is difficult to say, whether, at the time of Moses' education, the institute was still in its full perfection, or had already begun to degenerate. We may presume, however, that it was even now upon the decline, from certain juggleries which the Hebrew law-giver borrowed therefrom, and some not very commendable artifices which he adopted. But the spirit of the founders was not yet extinct, and the doctrine of the unity of the Creator of the world still rewarded the aspirations of the initiated.

This doctrine, (which involved as a necessary consequence an utter contempt of polytheism,) together with the scarcely separable tenet of the Immortality of the Soul, constituted the rich treasure which the young Hebrew carried away with him from the mysteries of Isis. At the same time he became acquainted, in that school, with the laws and powers of Nature, which, at that period, were likewise hidden lore; and this knowledge empowered him subsequently to work miracles, and to compete, in Pharaoh's presence, with his former masters, the magicians, whom, in some things, he was able to overcome. His after career evinces that he had been an observant and apt scholar, and had reached the last and highest grade of initiation.

In this same school, he also collected a large stock of hieroglyphs, mystic forms, and ceremonies, of which his inventive spirit made ample use in the sequel. He had traversed the whole realm of Egyptian wisdom, examined the whole system of the priests, estimated its faults and its excellencies, its strength and its weakness, and gained an extensive and valuable insight into the Egyptian king-craft.

It is not known how long he remained in the school of the

priests; but the lateness of his political appearance (towards his eightieth year,) renders it probable that he may have devoted twenty years and more to the study of the mysteries and of state policy. This residence with the priests, however, appears in no way to have precluded him from intercourse with his countrymen; and he had sufficient opportunity of witnessing the oppression under which they groaned.

His Egyptian education had not extinguished his patriotic feelings. The maltreatment of his countrymen reminded him that he too was a Hebrew, and a righteous indignation arose in his bosom whenever he saw them suffer. The more he began to feel his own powers, the more was his anger roused at the unworthy usage of his brethren.

One day he saw a Hebrew assaulted by an Egyptian taskmaster: the sight was too much for him,—he slew the Egyptian. The deed soon gets notoriety, his life is in danger, he must leave the country, and he takes refuge in the Arabian desert. Many writers date this flight into Arabia in his fortieth year, but without evidence. It is enough for us to know that Moses could not be very young when it occurred.

This exile begins a new epoch of his life; and, if we wish to interpret rightly his subsequent political appearance in Egypt, we must accompany him through the period of his seclusion in Arabia. He carried thither a relentless hatred towards the oppressors of his race, together with all the knowledge which he had acquired in the mysteries. His soul was full of ideas and projects, his heart full of bitterness, and there was nothing in this unpeopled waste to dissipate his thoughts.

The record represents him as feeding the sheep of Jethro, an Arabian Bedouin. This deep degradation from all his prospects and hopes in Egypt, to the condition of a herdsman in Arabia,—from the future ruler of men, to a shepherd's menial,—how sorely must it have wounded his heart!

Under the garb of a shepherd, he bears a fiery ruler's heart, a never-resting ambition. Here, in this romantic waste, where the present offers him nothing, he has recourse to the past and the future, and holds converse with his own silent thoughts. All the scenes of oppression which he had already witnessed now pass in review before his memory, and there is nothing to prevent their sting from going deep into his soul. Nothing is more intolerable to a great mind than the endurance of wrong; besides which, it is to his own brethren that the wrong is done. A noble pride awakes in his bosom, and this pride is reinforced by an impetuous desire of action and renown.

Is every thing which he has treasured up through a long

course of years, every bright and vast thought and scheme which he has entertained,—is all this to perish with him in this waste? Shall it be for nought that he has thought and schemed?—His fiery spirit cannot endure the idea. He rises above his lot: this desert shall not be the limit of his history; for something great is he destined by that high Being whom he learned to know in the mysteries. His imagination, kindled by solitude and silence, espouses the cause of the oppressed. Like joins with like, and the unhappy will gladly side with the unhappy. In Egypt he had been an Egyptian, a Hierophant, a military commander;—in Arabia he becomes a Hebrew. Greatly and gloriously the idea rises before his soul,—“**I WILL FREE THIS PEOPLE.**”

But what possibility is there of accomplishing this project? Numberless are the obstacles that crowd upon his mind; and those which he has to overcome in the hearts of his own countrymen themselves, are by far the most formidable. *There* he can anticipate neither union nor boldness, neither self-reliance nor energy, neither public spirit nor a bold action-prompting inspiration:—a long servitude, a debasement of four hundred years standing, has extinguished all these sentiments. The people at whose head he is to put himself, are both incapable and unworthy of the enterprise. From them he can expect nothing, and yet without them he can do nothing. What course then remains open to him? Before he undertakes their emancipation, he must make them fit to be emancipated. He must reinstate them in those human rights of which they have been robbed. He must revive in their breasts those sentiments which a long-continued barbarism has extinguished; he must kindle within them, hope, confidence, heroism, enthusiasm.

But these sentiments can only spring from a feeling (genuine or illusory) of *power*; and whence are the slaves of the Egyptians to derive such a feeling? Supposing even that he does succeed in carrying them away for the moment by his eloquence, will not this artificial inspiration forsake them in the first danger? Will they not relapse into their slave-feeling, more disheartened than ever?

Here the Egyptian Priest and Statesman comes to the help of the Hebrew. From his mysteries, from his priest-school at Heliopolis, memory recalls that powerful instrumentality by which a few priests ruled at their pleasure millions of rude men. This instrumentality is no other than reliance upon super-earthly protection; faith in supernatural powers. Since, therefore, he discovers nothing in the visible world, in the natural course of things, whereby he may give energy to his oppressed

countrymen ; since he can attach their faith to nothing that is of the earth,—he attaches it to heaven. Since he must relinquish all hope of inspiring them with confidence in their own powers, he has no course left, but to give them a Deity who does possess the power requisite for success. If he can but succeed in giving them confidence in this Deity, then he has made them strong and bold. This confidence, therefore, is the flame at which he must kindle all other virtues and energies. Can he but authenticate himself to his brethren, as the organ and ambassador of this Deity,—then they are as a ball in his hands ; he can drive them at his pleasure. But now the question arises,—*What deity* must he announce to them ; and how is he to authenticate the announcement ?

Shall he announce to them the true God—the Demiurgos—the Jao—in whom he believes himself ; whom he has learned to know in the mysteries ?

How could he for one moment expect, from an ignorant slave-rabble, the recognition of a truth which was the peculiar heritage of a few Egyptian sages ; and the recognition of which presupposes and requires a high degree of enlightenment ? How could he flatter himself with the hope that the scum of Egypt would understand that, which was comprehended by a very few only of the best men of that country ?

But, supposing even that he should succeed in giving the Hebrews the knowledge of the true God,—they could not, in their then condition, derive any benefit from this knowledge. On the contrary, it would frustrate, rather than forward, his great object. The true God concerned himself not more for the Hebrews than for any other people. The true God could not be expected to fight for them, or disturb the course of nature to please them. He would leave them to fight their own battle with the Egyptians, and would take no part in their struggle, in the way of miracle. How then could the knowledge of him avail them ?

Shall he announce to them a false and fabulous god, against whom his own reason revolts ; whom the mysteries have rendered offensive to him ? For this his mind is too enlightened ; his heart too upright and noble. He will not build his beneficent scheme upon a falsehood. The inspiration that now animates him, refuses to aid him in deception ; and, in a course so despicable, so repugnant to his own inmost convictions, his energy, zeal, and constancy, would soon fail him. He will complete and perfect the benefit which he designs to bestow upon his people. He will not merely make them free and indepen-

dent; he will enlighten, and make them happy. He will build for eternity.

His work, then, must be based upon truth—not upon falsehood. But how to reconcile these contradictions? He cannot give the true God to the Hebrews, since they are incapable of receiving him. A fabulous god he will not give them; for he scorns the odious task. It only remains, then, *to give them his true God under a fabulous character.*

Now, therefore, he examines the religion of his reason, and considers what he must add to it, and what he must take away, in order to ensure its favourable reception with his people. He places himself in their situation; comes down to their level, and discovers in their minds the secret threads to which he must attach his truth.

He ascribes, therefore, to his God those attributes which their capacities and condition demand. He adapts his Jao to the people to whom he designs to announce him; he adapts him to the circumstances under which he makes the announcement; and thus arises *Jehovah*.

He finds, indeed, a faith in divine things already existing in his countrymen's minds; but a faith which has degenerated into the grossest superstition. This superstition he must root out, but the faith he must preserve. He must dissociate it from its present unworthy object, and lead it to his new Deity. Superstition itself places in his hands the means of doing so. According to the universal notion of those times, every people enjoyed the guardianship of its own national-God; and it flattered the national pride to exalt this God above the Gods of all other nations. Not that the divinity of the latter was in any way denied—it was fully recognized: only they must not presume to an equality with the national-God. It was to this error that Moses attached his truth. He made the Demiurgos of the mysteries the national-God of the Hebrews. But he went a step further.

He was not satisfied with merely making this national-God the most powerful of all Gods,—he made him the only God, and drove all other deities into their essential nothingness. He gave him to the Hebrews, indeed, as a peculiar national-God, in order to accommodate himself to their ideas; but, at the same time, he subjected to him all other gods, and all the powers of nature. Thus, in the form under which he exhibited his Deity to the Hebrews, he preserved those two most important attributes—Unity and Omnipotence; and rendered them all the more effective by veiling them in this human garb.

The childish vanity of desiring to monopolize the Deity must now be pressed into the service of truth, and facilitate the admission of his doctrine of the One God. No doubt, it is only by a new error that he overthrows the old; but this new error is much nearer to the truth than that for which it is substituted. And, after all, it is only by this little appendage of error that his truth gains acceptance; and the whole of his success is owing to this foreseen misconception of his doctrine. What could his Hebrews have done with a philosophical God? But, with this national-God he can do wonders with them. Let the reader only place himself in the situation of the Hebrews. Ignorant as they are, they measure the power of deities by the prosperity of the nations under their guardianship. Neglected and oppressed by men, they believe themselves forgotten by all the gods likewise. The relation in which they stand towards the Egyptians, they regard as indicating the relation in which their god stands towards the god of the Egyptians: he is but a dimly-shining light compared with them; or they doubt, perhaps, whether they have a god at all. For the first time it is proclaimed to them that *they* too have a Protector in the starry sphere; that this Protector is awakened from his slumber; that he rises and girds himself to do great things for them against their enemies.

This proclamation of their God is like the summons of a general to his soldiers, to assemble under his conquering banner. And if, at the same time, this general gives specimens of his prowess, or if they know him of old, then the most timid are carried along by the giddy inspiration: and this; likewise, Moses calculated upon.

The conference which he holds with the apparition in the burning bush, exhibits to us the doubts that had suggested themselves to his mind, and the manner in which he had solved them. "Will my unhappy countrymen have confidence in a God who has so long neglected them; who now, all at once, falls as it were from the clouds; whose very name they have never heard; who has been for centuries a passive spectator of their wrongs? Will they not rather conceive the God of their prosperous foes to be the more powerful?" This was the first thought that would naturally arise in the mind of the new prophet. Now, how does he get over this difficulty? He makes his Jao the *God of their fathers*; he connects him, consequently, with their old national traditions, and so changes him into a household and familiar deity. But, to show that he means the true and only God; to prevent his Deity from being confounded with all creatures of superstition; to allow no room for miscon-

ception;—he gives him that sacred name which he actually bears in the mysteries,—“I will be what I will be.” “Say to the people of Israel,” he represents him as declaring, “I WILL BE hath sent me to you.”

In the mysteries, the Deity actually bore this name. But this name would be perfectly unintelligible to the Hebrews. They could not possibly attach any meaning to it; and Moses might, therefore, with another name, have succeeded better; but he was willing to expose himself to this difficulty, rather than renounce an idea which was all in all with him,—namely, to make the Hebrews acquainted with the God who was revealed in the mysteries of Isis. Since it is pretty well established, that the Egyptian mysteries had flourished for a considerable period before Jehovah appeared to Moses in the bush, it is a remarkable circumstance that he assumes the very name which he already bore in these mysteries.

But it was not enough that Jehovah proclaimed himself to the Hebrews as a God already known to them, as the God of their fathers,—he must authenticate himself as a powerful God ere they could place any reliance upon him, and this was the more necessary, since their condition in Egypt hitherto, could not have given them any great opinion of their tutelar deity. Moreover, since he announced himself to them through the medium of a third party, he must entrust his power to this third party, and qualify him to verify by wonderful works, both his own mission and the power and greatness of him who sent him.

If, therefore, Moses wished to authenticate his mission, he must do so by signs and wonders. That he actually performed deeds of this sort there can be no doubt; *how* he performed them, and what we are to think respecting them, must be left to the reader's own reflections.

The narrative in which Moses clothes his mission, possesses all the features requisite to inspire the Hebrews with faith therein, and this was all that was necessary. With us, this is no longer necessary. We know, for example, that it must have been indifferent to the Creator of the world, supposing that he had determined to appear to a human being in fire or wind, whether the latter appeared before him barefoot or shod; Moses, however, puts into the mouth of his Jehovah, the command that he should draw off his shoes from his feet, for he well knew that he must strengthen, with the Hebrews, the idea of the divine sanctity, by means of a sensible image, and such an image memory furnished him with from the ceremonies of initiation.

Thus he would likewise consider that his difficulty of speech might prove an obstacle—he provides for this obstacle; he em-

bodies in his narrative the objections which he had to apprehend from others, and Jehovah himself must remove them. He consents, moreover, to undertake his mission only after a long resistance: the more importance would be consequently attached to the command which imposed this task upon him. In short, he exhibits in his story as distinctly and vividly as possible every thing which to the Israelites, as well as to ourselves, would be most difficult of belief; and he had, no doubt, good reasons for so doing.

Now, to recapitulate briefly the foregoing:—*What was the precise plan which Moses projected in the Arabian Desert?*

He desired to lead the Israelitish people out of Egypt, and to give them an independent political existence and constitution in a land of their own; but, since he perfectly well knew the difficulties which would impede him in this undertaking, since he knew that no reliance was to be placed upon the native energies of this people until they should be inspired with self-reliance, courage, hope—since he foresaw that his eloquence would be lost upon the depressed and enslaved minds of the Hebrews, he perceived that he must promise them a higher and super-earthly guardianship—that he must, as it were, marshal them under the banner of a divine commander.

He gives them, therefore, a God, in order first of all to free them from Egypt; but, since that is not to be all—since he must give them another country in place of that of which he deprives them, and since they must conquer this and keep it by force of arms, it is necessary that he collect their united powers into one body politic;—he must give them laws and a constitution.

But, as Priest and Statesman, he knows that the strongest and most essential support of all regular government is Religion. He must, therefore, in the work of legislation that lies before him, use the deity whom he gave them, in the first instance, as a mere commander to deliver them from Egypt; consequently he must proclaim him to them in that character in which he means afterwards to use him. Now, for legislation and constitution-making, he needs the true God; for he is a great and noble man, who will not build upon falsehood a work that is to endure. He desires to make the Hebrews happy, and permanently happy, by the constitution which he has designed for them; and this requires a legislation grounded upon truth. Yet, for this truth their minds are not prepared: he cannot, therefore, *reason* them into it. Since he cannot convince,—he must persuade, humour, astound them. He must ascribe to the true God whom he reveals to them, attributes which may render him interesting and intel-

ligible to their feeble minds; he must veil him in a heathenish garb, and he must be contented even though they value his true God just for this heathenish garb, and receive the truth only in a heathenish fashion. And thus he gains a result of immense importance. He gains this—that the foundation of his legislation is true; consequently, that a future Reformer will not need to subvert that foundation in order to improve men's ideas, which is the inevitable fate of all false religions as soon as the light of reason is let in upon them.

All other polities of that time, and of later times also, were based upon deception and error, upon polytheism; although, as we have seen, there were in Egypt a small class of superior minds who cherished just conceptions of the Supreme Being. Moses, who was himself of this class, and owed to this class his more elevated ideas of Deity, was the first who ventured, not merely to publish this secret doctrine of the mysteries, but even to make it the foundation of a state-polity. He becomes then, for the sake of the world and of posterity, a betrayer of the mysteries, and allows a whole nation to participate in a truth which had, until then, been the monopoly of a few sages. He certainly could not, along with this new religion, give his countrymen minds to comprehend it, and in that respect the Egyptian Epoptæ had a great advantage over them. The Epoptæ reached the truth through their reason:—the Hebrews could at the best but believe it blindly.

Bridport.

P. H.